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PHILBY

—by the US agent who worked with him

CHRISTOPHER FELIX (nom-de-plume of a former American diplomat and secret intelligence official who was Philby's opposite number in Washington) assesses the damage Kim Philby's spying did to the West.

KIM PHILBY came to us in 1949 in sign of a reinvigorated Anglo-American partnership.

The operation whose command I shared with Philby, an especially dangerous one, not only failed, but many men lost their lives.

He did not, finally, destroy Anglo-American co-operation in intelligence affairs, but he did poison the atmosphere for a considerable time.

The damage Philby wrought was clearly extensive. His was a classic case of penetration in the interests of a rival service, the professional aim of intelligence services the world over. The Russians have every reason to be grateful to him.

Philby's knowledge of both British and American intelligence personnel and—equally important for the Russians—of the structure and operational methods of the two services, was very great.

At the same time, he did not know everything.

It would not be in the interests of Britain or America, even today, to make public a detailed inventory of the damage wrought to those interests by Philby.

Malcolm Muggeridge once complained about the governmental tendency to refuse comment on losses of this kind. 'Secrets which are known to have leaked,' he wrote in some dudgeon, 'far from being written off, are guarded with particular ferocity.' What Muggeridge didn't realise, and Philby did, is that silence is the only way of downgrading the information passed by a spy such as Philby.

For neither he nor his Russian masters have an accurate and certain knowledge of how much, in proportion to the whole, he knew at the time he was operating. They do not even know for certain when suspicion first attached to Philby, and therefore they do not know, beyond a certain obvious limit, exactly how much of the information he provided them with was valid.

Relations between secret services are probably the most sensitive—and accurate—barometer of the true state of international politics. In the reviving Anglo-American partnership of 1949 co-operation between the British and American services was therefore fast regaining the scope and intimacy which had characterised their wartime relations.

Philby's arrival on the American scene was thus in response to an estimate shared by policy-makers in London and Washington of the need for wider and closer co-operation in the field of secret operations, both intelligence and political.

One of Philby's first acts in Washington was to assume command with me of a new joint Anglo-American operation, the first venture of its kind since the war. Philby received his instructions from London, I received mine from my immediate superiors in Washington, and we then jointly formulated the orders for our agents abroad.

This meant frequent consultations: over a year or more I saw Philby in my office on an average of twice a week; and in time we came to see a great deal of each other, at either his house or mine.

Philby's reputation was such that his appointment was taken in Washington as an earnest of serious British intentions for our mutual cooperation. He was felt to carry weight. Everything conspired to present him in a favourable light. Even the fact that his father had been interned at the beginning of the war, and that Philby had nonetheless rendered such distinguished wartime service, was taken by many in Washington—myself included—as a measure of his loyalty.

Those among us who had known Philby in London during the war, or later in Turkey, commented enthusiastically on his skill and ability.

I remember talking with an American colleague who had known Philby during the war, and who had come to see me just after Philby left my office. While we were talking something kept working at the back of my mind. (It must be understood that no matter how closely two intelligence services may cooperate, there are always things which are withheld, and there is, in the simple nature of things, a constant jockeying for advantage.)

Suddenly, perhaps half an hour after Philby had left me, I perceived the advantage he had adroitly gained over me. I interrupted my American colleague to exclaim, 'I'm bleeding! I've just realised I've been stabbed!'

He burst into laughter. 'If you've only realised it now,' he said, 'it was Philby who did it!'

It was not widely known in Washington, even among professional intelligence officers, that Philby had set up the Soviet section of the British service in 1944. Those who now denounce the establishment of this operation in 1944 as running counter to the interest of peaceful postwar co-operation with the Russians betray a romantic over-estimate of the true weight of espionage in international life, and a convenient lapse of memory, or ignorance, of Russian activities at the time.

However, word of it did get around, further enhancing Philby's reputation by establishing him as a substantive expert in the field which counted most.

Philby was known to have been involved in a major bureaucratic battle in London during the war and to have come out the victor. He thus arrived among us in the prestigious role—particularly appealing to Americans—of leader of a faction of 'Young Turks' who had imposed their will on an 'Old Guard.'

Future chief

I do not recall anyone saying then that Philby was a probable future chief of the British service—that estimate only became common currency after his flight to Moscow in 1963—but it was generally accepted that he would in time become, if he was not already, a major factor in the British service.

The potency of this aspect of

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